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LETTERS

OF

COLUMBUS AND VESPUCCIUS.

[Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society.]

1878.

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: Xpo. FERENS. /

LETTERS

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

AND

AMERICUS VESPUCCIUS.

WITH AN INTRODUCTION

BY

GEORGE DEXTER, A.M.,

RECORDING SECRETARY OF THE MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Reprinted from the Proceedings of the Society.

BOSTON:

PRESS OF JOHN WILSON AND SON.

1878.

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1878. Nov. 29

With [illegible]

The Editor.

LETTERS

OF

COLUMBUS AND VESPUCCIUS.

At the stated meeting of the Massachusetts Historical Society, held in Boston on Thursday the 10th of October, 1878, Mr. George Dexter called attention to the volume entitled "Cartas de Indias publícalas por primera vez," presented at a previous meeting, and said: —

This sumptuous volume, a large quarto, prepared by a royal commission presided over by the Director-general of public Instruction, and published under the auspices of the Ministry of Fomento of the Spanish government, contains a large number of hitherto unpublished letters and reports relating to the discovery and early history of America. These documents, drawn from the National Historical Archives of Spain, the commissioners have separated into six classes. The first class consists of two letters of Columbus, one of Vespuccius, two of Bishop Las Casas, and two of Bernal Diaz del Castillo. The second class or division contains sixty-five documents relating to New Spain, which are classified again under the heads of Friars, Prelates, Clergy, Viceroys, Governors, Caciques, Officers of justice and administration, and Individuals. Here we find letters or communications from various missionaries, bishops, governors, and others connected with the colony. The third class, under the title of Central America, contains letters from the Bishops of Guatemala and Chiapa; the fourth, Peru, papers of the Licenciados Cristóbal Vaca de Castro and Pedro de la Gasca. The fifth division contains documents

relating to the province of Rio de la Plata during the administration of Martinez de Irala (1555–56). The sixth class consists of a petition of the Bishop of Manilla to the President of the Council of the Indies, giving an account of the state of the Philippine Islands in 1585, and their religious needs. There are in all one hundred and eight documents in the volume.

The work is enriched with critical notes, a geographical vocabulary, short biographical sketches, a glossary of foreign and little used words; and, as a fit crown of its merits, photo-lithographic *fac-similes* of some of the more important documents printed in it. There are also twenty-two sheets of reproductions of signatures and seals, and three maps, printed in colors, which, although having no immediate relation to the text of the work, are curious and of great interest. The volume is beautifully printed, upon paper made especially for the purpose, and with new types cast for the work. The preface states that the greatest care and labor have been used to secure accuracy. His Excellency the Count de Toreno, the Minister of "Fomento," has presented this copy to the Library of the Society through our own State Department at Washington.

I have caused translations to be made of the letters of Columbus and Vespuccius, which I beg leave to submit to the Society. They may, perhaps, be thought worthy of a place in our printed Proceedings. The first letter of Columbus is without date. The editors of the volume, having in mind the instructions given to Columbus, April 23d, 1497, "for the peopling of the islands and *terra firma* discovered and to be discovered in the Indies," * are of opinion that this letter must have been written toward the end of the year 1496, or the beginning of 1497. I felt confident on first reading the

* Printed by Navarrete, in his Coleccion de los Viages y Descubrimientos, vol. ii. pp. 182–185. Spotorno had, in 1823, published an Italian translation from a copy found among the "Charters and Grants" sent by Columbus to his friend Nicolo Oderrigo for safe keeping, then lately obtained by the Genoese government. These instructions are Spotorno's Document, No. VI. An English translation of this work was published in London the same year.

letter that it must be of earlier date, and subsequent examination has confirmed me in this opinion. The matters of which it treats are those that would naturally be attended to and defined quite early in the history of the colonization of a new-found country. Columbus returned from his first voyage in the spring of 1493, reaching Palos on the 15th of March, and was received by Ferdinand and Isabella at Barcelona about the middle of April. But the plans for a second voyage and the establishment of a colony did not wait even his formal reception. Navarrete prints a letter from their Majesties, dated March 30th, congratulating him on his discovery, and charging him to hasten to the Court to give orders for the preparation for his return to the New World.*

The papal bulls of concession had been sought at once from Alexander VI., and bear date of May 3d and 4th. Royal grants to Columbus, and royal selection of proper officers for revenue and colonization, followed rapidly. The nineteenth document in Navarrete's second volume, dated May 7th, appoints Gomez Tello to go to the Indies with Columbus, to receive and send to Castile what belongs to their Highnesses.† On the 23d of May, many requisitions for things needed for the new voyage were signed; all persons were forbidden to go to the Indies or to send goods there, without the royal sanction or that of Columbus and Juan de Fonseca, by a decree of the same date;‡ and Alvaro de Acosta was appointed *alguacil* to administer justice on the voyage and in the islands, the next day.§ Columbus was confirmed in his title of "Admiral, Viceroy, and Governor of the islands and *terra firma*, both what he had discovered and what he might discover," on May 28th; and his instructions, "as well for the voyage which he is to make as for the good government of the new colony," ‖ were signed on the 29th. These instructions seem to me to cover all the ground, and to settle the question of the date of

* Navarrete, Coleccion, vol. ii. p. 21.

† Gomez Tello did not go out with Columbus. See Navarrete, vol. ii. p. 86.

‡ Navarrete, Coleccion, &c., vol. ii. p. 51.

§ Ibid., vol. ii. p. 54. ‖ Ibid., vol. ii. pp. 57–62, 66–72.

this letter. After impressing upon Columbus the necessity of treating the natives well, and of striving to convert them to the true faith, for which purpose Father Buil and other clergy are sent with him, and giving particular directions for the choice of vessels, enrolment of crews, and registration of armament and goods, the instructions proceed in the eighth section to lay down the regulations and order of landing and discharging at the end of the voyage. Each ship is to declare and show all that it carries,— men, arms, ammunition, provisions, &c.; "and because no person is allowed to carry merchandise to open trade for gold or other things in all the said islands and *terra firma* without the order of their Highnesses, as has been said, if it happens that they arrive with more than was manifested at the time of departure from Cadiz, as was set down in the book which the lieutenant of the aforesaid accountant-general who is to reside in the said islands has brought with him, let it be condemned, and let the said Admiral and Viceroy, or whoever holds the power from him, cause it to be taken and give it to the person who is appointed to keep the goods, which their Highnesses send there, in presence of the said lieutenant of the accountant, that he may take charge of it." *

The ninth section lays down regulations for trade in the islands; the tenth appoints courts of justice. The fourteenth provides that, immediately upon arrival, a custom-house shall be established where merchandise shall be entered before the proper officials and registered in two books. The seventeenth article recounts the formalities required at the port of Cadiz, whence all articles are to go to the islands, and where all re-

* "E porque ninguna ni algunas personas non han de llevar mercadurías algunas para facer rescate alguno de oro ni de otras cosas en todas las dichas islas é tierra-firme, sin mandamiento de sus Altezas, como dicho es, si acaesciere llevaren mas de lo que manifestaron al tiempo que de Castilla partieron, segun fuere asentado en el libro que ha de llevar el que fuere por Teniente de los dichos Contadores mayores, que ha de residir en las dichas islas, que lo pierdan, é ge lo faga tomar el dicho Almirante é Visorey, ó quien su poder hobiere, é lo entregue á la persona que por sus Altezas ha de tener allá la mercadoría que sus Altezas envian, en presencia del dicho Teniente de los Contadores, porque él le faga cargo dello." — Navarrete, vol. ii. p. 69.

turning vessels are to discharge. These instructions, apart from their bearing on the question under discussion, are interesting, and, so far as I have been able to inform myself, have never been printed except by Señor Navarrete.

If further testimony be needed, we have in the forty-seventh, forty-eighth, and forty-ninth documents of Navarrete's second volume, under date of June 7th, 1493, the appointment of Bernal Diaz de Pisa as Deputy Accountant-General, a grant of salary to him, and his instructions. These last exhibit many minute details of the regulations for trade and manner of keeping accounts. Again, the fifty-ninth document, dated August 4th, informs Columbus that Sebastian de Olano is to go out as their Majesties' receiver (*Receptor*).

Columbus sailed from Palos, on his second voyage, September 25th, 1493. He had a large fleet, seventeen vessels in all; a company of about fifteen hundred souls, having been obliged to refuse many who offered; a supply of provisions, seeds for harvest, some animals and other necessaries of colonization.* At the Island of Gomera, he took in many live animals with which to stock Hispaniola, and seeds of various fruits.† It was on this voyage, too, that he did what would be expected from this letter, — built a city or town which he called Isabella, and laid the foundations for a regular colony, with trade to the mother country and the neighborhood. So much is stated by nearly all his biographers.

There would seem to be little room for doubt, then, that this letter was written some time during the interval between the return of Columbus from his first voyage and his departure on the second; that is, between March 15th and September 25th, 1493.

The National Historical Archives possess two copies of this letter, which, with the exception of the signature, is not in the handwriting of Columbus. The variations between these copies — so slight as scarcely to be worth noticing — are carefully enumerated by the editor of the "Cartas de Indias" in

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* Historie del S. D. Fernando Colombo, chap. xliv.

† Irving's Columbus (London, 1828), vol. ii. pp. 3, 4.

a note. In another note on the signature of Columbus, he calls attention to the variation between the signatures of these letters and Columbus's signature, as given by Navarrete and Washington Irving. The signatures given by these authors, however, do not pretend to be *fac-similes*, but are printed in ordinary type. There are many *fac-simile* reproductions of Columbus's signature; but they are all, or nearly all, derived from the letters now preserved in the receptacle prepared for them by the Genoese authorities in 1821. Lithographs of two of these letters were published by Spotorno in his "Codice Diplomatico," in 1823. Bossi's "Vita di Cristoforo Colombo," Milan, 1818, has as a frontispiece the De Bry portrait with the signatures of these letters, then in Turin, annexed. Marmocchi's "Viaggi al Nuovo Continente," Prato, 1840, contains the portrait that appeared with the French translation of Navarrete, to which is added one of the Spotorno signatures. Mr. Goodrich, in his "Life of Columbus," New York, 1874, gives several *fac-similes*, all of which can, I think, be traced back to Spotorno. Columbus himself, in his will, describes how his signature is to be written, and orders his heirs to sign with it.* One peculiarity, new to me, is stated by the Spanish editor, and is perhaps worth noticing. He says that he has examined various autographs of Columbus, including some of the letters to his son Diego, published by Navarrete, and finds that Columbus made a distinction between letters written by another hand and only signed by himself, and holograph letters. To the signature of the last he was accustomed to add a rubric or flourish. This distinction will be easily noticed in comparing the signatures to the first and second of the letters here printed. I do not remember to have seen elsewhere any allusion to a rubric connected with Columbus's signature.†

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* Navarrete, vol. ii. p. 229. Irving's Columbus (Lond. 1828), vol. iv. p. 421.

† The Cabinet of our Society contains photographs of three letters preserved in Genoa, two of them being those published by Spotorno. The third is the letter, of which an Italian translation was read to the Maryland Historical Society as the original, by Mr. Robert Dodge, in 1851. The colon before the Χρο appears in neither signature, nor is there any sign of a rubric.

Toward the close of the second letter, Columbus alludes to the bad weather when the Spanish Court was at Burgos in 1497. This must have been early in the year, for the Court was then awaiting the return of the fleet from Flanders. This fleet had carried out the Infanta Joanna, who was to be married to the Archduke Philip, and was bringing back the Princess Margaret, the Emperor Maximilian's daughter, the destined bride of the heir of the Spanish monarchies. The fleet arrived early in March, and the wedding was solemnized April 3d. *

The letter of Vespuccius offers nothing that demands remark. The signature shows plainly the name spelled Amerrigo. It may be compared with the *fac-simile* of a signature given by F. A. de Varnhagen, in his "Amerígo Vespucci," Lima, 1865, p. 68, n., as the genuine signature of Vespuccius.

* See Prescott's Ferdinand and Isabella, Part II. chap. iv.

A Letter of Christopher Columbus to their Catholic Majesties concerning the colonization and commerce of Hispaniola, and of the other Islands, discovered and to be discovered. Without date.

MOST HIGH AND MIGHTY SOVEREIGNS, — In obedience to your Highnesses' commands, and with submission to superior judgment, I will say whatever occurs to me in reference to the colonization and commerce of the Island of Española, and of the other islands, both those already discovered and those that may be discovered hereafter.

In the first place, as regards the Island of Española: Inasmuch as the number of colonists who desire to go thither amounts to two thousand, owing to the land being safer and better for farming and trading, and because it will serve as a place to which they can return and from which they can carry on trade with the neighboring islands:

Item. That in the said island there shall be founded three or four towns, situated in the most convenient places, and that the settlers who are there be assigned to the aforesaid places and towns.

Item. That for the better and more speedy colonization of the said island, no one shall have liberty to collect gold in it except those who have taken out colonists' papers [*tomaren veçindad*], and have built houses for their abode, in the town in which they are, that they may live united and in greater safety.

Item. That each town shall have its alçalde or alcaldes, and its notary public, as is the use and custom in Castile.

Charta de Cristóbal Colon á los Reyes Católicos, acerca de la poblacion y negociacion de la Española y de las otras islas descubiertas y por descubrir. Sin fecha.

MUY ALTOS Y PODEROSOS SEÑORES, — Obedesçiendo lo que vuestras alteças me mandaron, diré lo que me ocurre para la poblaçion y negoçiaçion, asy de la Ysla Española como de las otras, asy halladas como por hallar, sometiendome á mejor paresçer.

Primeramente, para en lo de la Ysla Española, que vayan hasta en número de dos mill veçinos, los que quisieren yr, porque la tierra esté más segura y se pueda mejor grangear é tratar, y servirá para que se puedan rebolver y traten las yslas comarcanas.

Yten, que en la dicha ysla se hagan tres o cuatro pueblos é repartidos en los lugares más convenibles, é los veçinos que allá fueren, sean repartidos por los dichos lugares y pueblos.

Yten, que porque mejor y más presto se pueble la dicha ysla, que ninguno tenga facultad para cojer oro en ella, salvo los que tomaren veçindad é hiçieren casas para su morada en la poblacion que estovieren, porque vivan juntamente y más seguros.

Yten, que en cada lugar é poblacion haya su alcalde o alcaldes con su escribano del pueblo, segun uso é costumbre de Castilla.

Ítem. That there shall be a church, and parish priests or friars to administer the sacraments, to perform divine worship, and for the conversion of the Indians.

Item. That none of the colonists shall go to seek gold without a license from the governor or alcalde of the town where he lives; and that he must first take oath to return to the place whence he sets out, for the purpose of registering faithfully all the gold he may have found, and to return once a month, or once a week, as the time may have been set for him, to render account and show the quantity of said gold; and that this shall be written down by the notary before the alcalde, or, if it seems better, that a friar or priest, deputed for the purpose, shall be also present.

Item. That all the gold thus brought in shall be smelted immediately, and stamped with some mark that shall distinguish each town; and that the portion which belongs to your Highnesses shall be weighed, and given and consigned to each alcalde in his own town, and registered by the above-mentioned priest or friar, so that it shall not pass through the hands of only one person, and there shall be no opportunity to conceal the truth.

Item. That all gold that may be found without the mark of one of the said towns in the possession of any one who has once registered in accordance with the above order shall be taken as forfeited, and that the accuser shall have one portion of it and your Highnesses the other.

Item. That one per centum of all the gold that may be found shall be set aside for building churches and adorning the same, and for the support of the priests or friars belonging to them; and, if it should be thought proper to pay any thing to the alcaldes or notaries for their

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Yten, que haya iglesia y abades o frayles para adminystracion de los sacramentos y cultos divinos y para conversion de los yndios.

Yten, que ninguno de los vezinos pueda yr á cojer oro, salvo con liçencia del gobernador o alcalde del lugar donde biviere, y que primero haga juramento de volver al mysmo lugar de do saliere, á registrar fielmente todo el oro que oviere cogydo y avido, y de volver una vez en el mes o en la semana, segun el tiempo le fuere asygnado, á dar quenta é manifestar la cantidad del dicho oro, é que se escriva por el escrivano del pueblo por ante el alcalde, y sy paresçiere, que haya asy mesmo un frayle o abad deputado para ello.

Yten, que todo el oro que asy se traxere, se aya luego de fundir y marcar de alguna marca que cada pueblo señalare, y que se pese y se dé y se entregue, á cada alcalde en su lugar, la parte que pertenesçiere á vuestras alteças, y se escriva por el dicho abad o frayle de manera que no pase por una sola mano, y asy no se pueda çelar la verdad.

Yten, que todo el oro que se hallare syn la marca de los dichos pueblos en poder de los que ovieren una vez registrado por la orden susodicha, le sea tomado por perdido, é haya una parte el acusador y lo ál para vuestras alteças.

Yten, que de todo el oro que oviere, se saque uno por ciento para la fábrica de las yglesias y ornamentos dellas é para sustentacion de los abades o frayles dellas; y sy paresciere que á los alcaldes y escrivanos se dé algo por

services, or for ensuring the faithful performance of their duties, that this amount shall be sent to the governor or treasurer who may be appointed there by your Highnesses.

Item. As regards the division of the gold, and the share that ought to be reserved for your Highnesses, this, in my opinion, must be left to the aforesaid governor and treasurer, because it will have to be greater or less according to the quantity of gold that may be found. Or, should it seem preferable, your Highnesses might, for the space of one year, take one half, and the collector the other, and a better arrangement for the division be made afterward.*

Item. That if the said alcaldes or notaries shall commit or be privy to any fraud, punishment shall be provided, and the same for the colonists who shall not have declared all the gold they have.

Item. That in the said island there shall be a treasurer, with a clerk to assist him, who shall receive all the gold belonging to your Highnesses, and the alcaldes and notaries of the towns shall each keep a record of what they deliver to the said treasurer.

Item. As, in the eagerness to get gold, every one will wish, naturally, to engage in its search in preference to any other employment, it seems to me that the privilege of going to look for gold ought to be withheld during some portion of each year, that there may be opportunity to have the other business necessary for the island performed.

Item. In regard to the discovery of new countries, I think permission should be granted to all that wish to go, and more liberality used

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su trabajo y porque agan fielmente sus oficios, que se remita al gobernador y thesorero que allá fueren por vuestras alteças.

Yten, quanto toca á la division del oro é de la parte que ovieren de aver vuestras alteças, esto, á my ver, deve ser remitido á los dichos gobernador y thesorero, porque averá ser más o menos segun la cantidad del oro que se hallare; o sy paresciere, que por tiempo de un año ayan vuestras alteças la mitad y los cojedores la otra mitad, ca despues podrá mejor determinarse cerca del dicho repartimiento.

Yten, que sy los dichos alcaldes y escrivanos hiçieren o consintieren algun fraude, se le ponga pena é asymesmo á los veçinos que por entero non manifestaren todo el oro que ovieren.

Yten, que en la dicha ysla haya thesorero que reciva todo el oro pertenesciente á vuestras alteças y tenga su escrivano que lo assiente, é los alcaldes y escrivanos de los otros pueblos, cada uno tome conoscimiento de lo que entregaren al dicho thesorero.

Yten, porque segun la codiçia del oro, cada uno querrá más ocuparse en ello, que en haçer otras grangerias, paresceme que alguna temporada del año se le deva defender la liçencia de yr á buscar oro, para que haya lugar que se hagan en la dicha ysla otras grangerias á ellas pertenesçientes.

Yten, para en lo de descobrir de nuevas tierras, paresçeme se deva dar liçencia á todos los que quisieren yr, y alargar la mano en lo del quinto,

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* The sovereigns demanded two-thirds of all the gold found as early as 1495. See Navarrete, vol. ii. p. 166.

in the matter of the fifth, making the tax easier, in some fair way, in order that many may be disposed to go on voyages.*

I will now give my opinion about ships going to the said Island of Española, and the order that should be maintained; and that is, that the said ships should only be allowed to discharge in one or two ports designated for the purpose, and should register there whatever cargo they bring or unload; and when the time for their departure comes, that they should sail from these same ports, and register all the cargo they take in, that nothing may be concealed.

Item. In reference to the transportation of gold from the island to Castile, that all of it should be taken on board the ship, both that belonging to your Highnesses and the property of every one else; that it should all be placed in one chest with two locks, with their keys, and that the master of the vessel keep one key and some person selected by the governor and treasurer the other; that there should come with the gold, for a testimony, a list of all that has been put into the said chest, properly marked, so that each owner may receive his own; and that, for the faithful performance of this duty, if any gold whatsoever is found outside of the said chest in any way, be it little or much, it shall be forfeited to your Highnesses.

Item. That all the ships that come from the said island shall be obliged to make their proper discharge in the port of Cadiz, and that no person shall disembark or other person be permitted to go on board until the ship has been visited by the person or persons deputed for that purpose, in the said city, by your Highnesses, to whom the master

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moderandolo en alguna buena manera, á fin de que muchos se dispongan á yr.

Ahora diré mi paresçer para la yda de los navios á la dicha Ysla Española, é la orden que se deva guardar, ques la siguiente: Que no puedan yr los dichos navios á descargar, salvo en uno o dos puertos para ello señalados, y ende registren todo lo que llevaren é descargaren; y cuando ovieren de partir, sea de los mismos puertos, é registren todo lo que cargaren, porque no se encubra cosa alguna.

Yten, que cerca del oro que se oviere de traer de las yslas para Castilla, que todo lo que se oviere de cargar, asy lo que fuere de vuestras alteças, como de cualesquier presonas, todo ello se ponga en una arca que tenga dos çerraduras con sus llaves, y quel maestro tenga la una, y otro presona quel gobernador y tesorero escogeren la otra; é venga por testimonyo la relacion de todo lo que se pusiere en la dicha arca, é señalado, para que cada uno aya lo suyo: y sy otro oro alguno se hallare fuera de la dicha arca en cualquier manera, poco o mucho, sea perdido, á fin que se haga fielmente y sea para vuestras alteças.

Yten, que todos los navios que vinieren de la dicha ysla, vengan á haçer su derecha descarga al puerto de Cadiz, y no salga presona dellos ny entren otros, hasta que vayan á los dichos navios la presona o presonas que para ello por vuestras altezas fueren deputadas en la dicha cibdad, á quien los maestros manifiesten todo lo que traen y muestren la fe de lo

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* Perhaps some light is thrown upon this tax of one-fifth by the documents Numbers V. and VI. of the Appendix to Navarrete's second volume.

shall show all that he carries, and exhibit the manifest of all the cargo, that it may be seen and examined if the said ship brings any thing hidden and not known at the time of lading.

Item. That the chest in which the said gold has been carried shall be opened in the presence of the magistrates of the said city of Cadiz, and of the person deputed for that purpose by your Highnesses, and his own property be given to each owner. — I beg your Highnesses to hold me in your protection; and I remain, praying our Lord God for your Highnesses' lives and the increase of much greater States,

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que ovieren cargado, para que se pueda ver é requerir sy los dichos navios traen cosa alguna encubierta é non manifestada al tiempo del cargar.

Yten, que en presençia de la justiçia de la dicha cibdad de Cadiz é de quien fuere para ello deputado por vuestras altezas, se aya de abrir el arca en que se traxere el dicho oro, y dar á cada uno lo suyo. — Vuestras alteças me ayan por encomendado, y quedo rogando á Nuestro Señor Dios por las vidas de vuestras altezas y acresçentamiento de muy mayores estados.

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: Xpo FERENS.

Letter of Christopher Columbus to their Catholic Majesties, laying before them certain observations on the art of navigation. From Granada, February 6, 1502.

MOST HIGH AND MIGHTY SOVEREIGNS AND LORDS, — I should wish to be the cause of pleasure and gratification to your Highnesses rather than of pain and displeasure; and, knowing the attraction and charm that new and interesting things possess for you, I will write, in obedience to your commands, whatever occurs to my memory of such things; and surely let them not be judged by my carelessness, but by my intention and good will, for in all things relating to the service of your Highnesses I have to learn of no man what I know how to do of my own self; and though my strength were to fail, and my labors exhaust me, in my soul the will would never be wanting, for I am so deeply your debtor.

Navigators and other people who trade upon the sea have always a better knowledge of those particular parts of the world where they are accustomed to make their voyages with least interruption, and for this reason each one of them knows better what he sees every day than what he sees only from year to year; and thus we receive with pleasure the accounts they themselves give us of what they have seen and collected, as certainly we derive greater knowledge from a thing which we learn by our own experience.

If we admit that the world is spherical according to the opinion of many writers who affirm this, or that science makes us lay down any other principle by its authority, it must not be understood that the

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Carta de Cristóbal Colon á los Reyes Católicos, exponiendo algunas observaciones sobre el arte de navegar. Granada, 6 de febrero de 1502.

MUY ALTOS Y MUY PODEROSOS REYES Y SENORES, — Yo querria ser cabsa de plaszer y holgura á Vuestras Alteças, que no de pesadumbre y hastio; mas como sé la afizion y deleyte que tienen á las cosas nuevas y dalgun ynterese, diré de unas y otras, compliendo con su mandamiento, aquello que agora me venga á la memoria; y cierto non judguen dellas por el desaliño, mas por la intinzion y buen deseo, ya que en todo lo que fuere del servizio de Vuestras Alteças, non he de deprender de ningun otro lo que yo sé fazer por my mesmo; que sy me faltáren las fuerzas y las fatigas me ryndieren, non desfallezerá en my ányma la voluntad como el más obligado y debdor que soy.

Los navigantes y otras gentes que tractan por la mar, tienen syempre mayor conoszimiento de las partidas particulares del mundo donde vsan y fazen sus contractaciones más continuo, y por esto cada vno destos sabe mejor de lo que vee cada dia, que no lo otro que viene de años há años: y asy reszebimos con delectazion la relazion quellos mesmos nos fazen de lo que vieron y collejieron, como cierto allegamos más grande enseñanza de aquello que deprendemos por nuestra propia espirenzia.

Si resconozemos el mundo ser espérico, segun el sentir de muchos escriptores que ansy lo afirman, o que la scienzia nos faga asentar otra cosa con

temperature of a zone is always even, for the diversity is great both at sea and on land.

The sun spreads its influence and the earth receives it in conformity with the formation of its valleys and mountains; and although the ancients have written enough concerning this, as Pliny, for instance, who says that under the north pole the climate is so mild that the people who live there never die except through vexation and disgust with life, when they hurl themselves from precipices and voluntarily kill themselves. *

We see here in Spain such diversity of temperature, that there is no need of testimony upon this point from any antiquity whatsoever. We see here in Granada the sierra covered with snow all through the year, which is a sign of great cold, and at the foot of this sierra are the Alpujarras, where the temperature is always very pleasant, without excessive cold or heat; and as it is in this province, so is it in enough others in Spain, which I refrain from mentioning by reason of their great number. I say that the same thing happens at sea, and particularly in those parts of the sea bordering on the land; and those who continually traffic there have better knowledge of this than those who trade in other parts.

In Andalusia in summer, after the sun has attained some height, the virazon, which is a wind that rises from the west, is regarded as certain for every day. This wind is very gentle, and lasts until evening. And as this virazon continues in that season in that region, so there are other winds in other parts and in other regions different in summer and in winter. Those who make a practice of sailing from Cadiz to Naples

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su auctoridad, no se deve entender que la tenplanza sea ygual en un clyma, porque la diversidad es grande asy en la mar como en la tierra.

El sol syembra su ynfluenzia y la tierra la reszibe segun las concavidades o montañas que son formadas en ella, y bien que harto hayan scripto los antiguos sobra esto, asy como Plinio, que dize que debaxo del norte ay tan suave tenplanza, que la gente que ally está jamas se muere, salvo por enfadamiento o aborrimiento de vida, que se despeñan y voluntariamente se matan.

Nos vemos aquy en España tanta diversydad de tenplanza, que non es menester el testimonio sobre esto de ninguna antiguedad del mundo: vemos aquy en Granada la syerra cubierta de nyeve todo el año, ques señal de gran frio, y al pie desta syerra son las Alpujarras donde es siempre suavisima tenplanza syn demasiado calor ny frio, y asy como es en esta provinzia, es en otras hartas en España, que se deja de dezir por la prolixidad dellas. Digo que en la mar acaesze otro tanto y en espezial en las comarcas de las tierras, y desto es en mayor conoszimiento los que continuo ally tractar, que no los otros que tractan en otras partes.

En el verano, en l'Andaluzia por muy cierto se tiene cada dia, despues de ser el sol altillo, la virazon, ques viento que sale del poniente, esta vien muy suave y dura hasta la tarde; asy como esta virazon continúa en aquel tiempo en esta region, ansy continúa otros vientos en otras partes y en ostra regiones diferentes el verano y el ynvierno. Los que andan con-

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* Pliny, Hist. Nat., lib. iv. c. xxvi.

know when they pass the coast of Catalonia, according to the season what wind to expect there; and the same when they pass through the Gulf of Narbonne. Those who go from Cadiz to Naples, if it is winter time, pass within sight of Cape Creo in Catalonia, through the Gulf of Narbonne: there the wind is very strong, and sometimes the ships are compelled to yield to it, and through its force are blown away to Barbary, and on this account they hug Cape Creo in order to keep further on the tack, and to reach the Pomegas of Marseilles or the Islands of Hyères, and after that they never leavé the coast until they reach their destination. If they are going from Cadiz to Naples in summer time, they sail along the coast of Barbary as far as Sardinia, in the same manner as has been said of the northern coast.* For these voyages, there are marked men who have made the passage so often, that they know all the ways and what weather to expect according to the season of the year. We commonly call such men pilots, which name is equivalent to guide on land; for, although one may know the road from here to Fuentarabia well enough to lead an army over it, he may not know that from here to Lisbon. It is the same at sea: some are pilots for Flanders, others for the Levant, every man for the country to which he is most accustomed.

The voyage and passage from Spain to Flanders is much frequented: there are great sailors who go on this service. In Flanders, in the month of January all the ships are ready to return home, and in this month it rarely happens that there are not some gusts of brysa, which is an east-north-east and north-north-east wind. These winds at this sea-

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tinuo de Cadiz á Napoles, ya saben cuando pasan por la costa de Catalunia, segund la sazon, el viento que han de hallar en ella, y asymismo cuando pasan por el golfo de Narbona. Estos que han de yr de Cadiz á Napoles, si es tiempo de ynvierno, van á vista de cabo de Creo en Catalunia, por el golfo de Narbona: entonzes vienta muy rezio, y las vezes las naos conviene le obedezcan y corran por fuerza hasta Berueria, y por esto van más al cabo Creo, por sostener más la bolina y cobrar las Pomegas de Marsella o las yslas de Eres, y despues jamas se desabarcan de la costa hasta llegar donde quier. Si de Cadiz ovieren de yr á Napoles en tiempo de verano, navegan por la costa de Berueria hasta Cerdena, ansy como está dicho de la otra costa de la tramotana. Para estas navegaziones ay hombres señalados, que sean dado tanto á ello, que conoszen todos estos caminos y qué temporales pueden esperar, segund la sazon del año en que fueren. Vulgarmente, á estos tales llamamos pylotos, que es tanto como en la tierra adalid; que bien que uno sepa muy bien el camino daqui á Fuentrrabia para llevar una hueste, ni lo sabe daqui á Lisbona. Esto mismo acaesze en la mar, que unos son pylotos de Flandes y otros de Levante, cada uno de la tierra donde más usa.

El tracto y tránsito d'España á Flandes mucho se continúa; grandes marineros ay que andan á este vso. En Flandes, en el mes de enero, están todas las naos despachadas para volver á sus tierras, y en este mes, de raro sale que no haya algunos estirones de brysa, ques lesnordeste y nornordeste. Estos vientos, á este tiempo, no vienen amorosos, salvo salvajes y

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* He means that the coast is hugged, as in the winter voyage.

son are not gentle, but fierce and cold, and almost dangerous: the distance of the sun and the condition of the earth are the causes that produce this. These brysas are not steady, although they do not fail to occur at the right season: those who sail with them are persons who are willing to run a risk, and they almost always get home with their hands in their hair. These persons, if the brysa fails them and some other wind blows against them, take refuge in the ports of France or England until another tide comes, and they can leave these harbors.

Sailors are greedy for money and eager to get home, and will risk every thing without waiting to see that the weather is settled. On another such occasion as this, when I was confined to my bed, I told your Highnesses what I could of the time of greatest safety for this voyage, which is after the sun has entered Taurus, and that the starting in the height and most dangerous time of winter should be abandoned. If the winds are favorable, the voyage is very short, and one ought not to start without some good certainty of the passage; and an opinion about that can be made here when the sky is seen to be very clear, and the wind rising from the north star and lasting several days, always with the same pleasant weather. Your Highnesses know well what occurred in the year ninety-seven, when you were at Burgos, in such anxiety because the weather continued bad and one storm followed another that you were going in disgust to Soria; and after the whole court had gone one Saturday, your Highnesses remained to start on Monday morning; and for a certain purpose on that night I said in a letter that I sent to your Highnesses; on such a day the wind began to blow, on the next day the fleet will not sail, waiting to see if the wind is steady; it will sail on Wednesday, and on Thursday or Friday it

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frios y fasta peligrosos: la distançia del sol y la calidad de la tierra son cabsa que se enjendre esto. Estas brysas no son estábiles, bien que asy no yerren el tiempo; los que navegan con ellas son presonas que se ponen á ventura y lo más de las veçes llegan con la mano en los cabellos. A estos, sy la brisa les falta y les haze fuerza otro viento, ponense en los puertos de Franzia o Yngalterra, hasta que venga otra marea que puedan salyr de los puertos.

La gente de la mar es cobdiziosa de dyneros y de volver á su casa, y todo lo aventuran syn esperar á ver quel tiempo sea firme. Cativo como estaba en cama, en otra tal ocasion dixe á Vuestras Alteças lo que pude de mayor seguridad desta navegazion, que era despues de ser el sol en Tauru, y renegar de fazer esta partida en la fuerza y más peligroso de ynvierno. Sy los vientos ayudan, muy corto es el tránsito, y non se debe de partir hasta tener buena certeza del viaje; y de acá se puede judgar dello, ques cuando se viere estar el çielo muy claro y salir el viento de la estrella de la tramotana y durar algunos dias, syempre en aquella alegria. Saben bien Vuestras Alteças lo que acontesció el año de nouenta y syete, cuando estaban en Burgos en tal congoxa por quel tiempo perseveraba crudo y se suçedian los estirones, que de enfadados se yban á Soria; y partida toda la corte un sabado, quedaron Vuestras Alteças para partir lunes de mañana; y á un çierto proposito, en aquella noche, en un escripto mio que envié á Vuestras Alteças, dezia: tal dia comenzó á ventar el viento: el otro dia no partirá la flota, aguardando sy el viento se afirma; partirá

will be abreast the Island of Huict,* and if it does not put in will reach Laredo next Monday, or the science of seamanship is entirely lost. This writing of mine, and your desire for the coming of the Princess, moved your Highnesses to change your minds and not go to Soria, but to try the opinion of the sailor; and on Monday a ship appeared off Laredo, which had refused to enter Huit, because it had few provisions.

The opinions in similar cases, both on sea and on land, are and have always been various, and now there will be many who will desire to sail to the discovered islands; and, if the road is known, those who have to trade and traffic, by the perfection of instruments, and the improved rigging of ships, will have greater knowledge of things and countries, winds, and seasons most convenient for their services, and more experience for the security of their persons.

May the Holy Trinity guard your Highnesses, as I pray and we have need, with all your great estates and lordships. From Granada, the 6th of February, 1502.

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el miercoles, y el jueves o viernes será tant avant como la isla de Huict, y seno se meten en ella, serán en Laredo el lunes que viene, o la razon de la marineria es toda perdida. Este escripto mio, con el deseo de la venida de la Prinzesa, movió á Vuestras Alteças á mudar de proposito de no yr á Soria y espirmentar la opinion del marinero; y el lunes remaneszió sobre Laredo una nao que refusó de entrar en Huit, porque tenia pocos bastimentos.

Muchos son los juizios y fueron syempre en la mar y en la tierra en semejantes casos, y agora han de ser muchos los que hayan de navegar á las yslas descobiertas; y sy el camino es ya conoszido, los que hayan de tractar y contractar, con la perfizion de los ystrumentos y el aparejar de las naos, habrán mayor conoszimiento de las cosas y de las tierras y de los vientos y de las epocas más convenybles para sus usos, y más espirenzia para la seguridad de sus presonas.

La Sancta Trenydad guarde á Vuestras Alteças como deseo y menester habemos, con todos sus grandes estados y señorios. De Granada, á seys de hebrero de mill y quinientos y dos años.

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* The Isle of Wight is the only island that answers the requirements of the text. The Spanish language has no W, and perhaps Huict or Huit represents Wight in phonetic spelling. I hazard this conjecture with some diffidence.

A Letter of Amerrigo Vespucci to the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo (Ximénes de Cisneros), giving his opinion about the goods that ought to be carried to the Antilles. From Seville, December 9, 1508.

VERY REVEREND AND MAGNIFICENT SIR, — I feel obliged to show my gratitude for the confidence which your most reverend lordship has shown me, and I will not fail to declare my opinion, without allowing any interest to influence me, although I could have no desire to speak of that; and now I am to answer in regard to what is to be carried to the islands, whether it is better that it should pass through one person's hands, and that your Highness should derive a profit, as the King of Portugal does from the trade with the Mina del Oro, or, as I think I have heard is your Highness's opinion, whether every one should have liberty to go and carry what he wishes.

I find a great difference between the traffic of the King of Portugal and that which we are considering; inasmuch as the first consists of sending to the country of the Moors, and to one single place, a few kinds of goods appraised at a fixed price; and for these the factors whom he has there are responsible for the amount of the valuation, or for the goods themselves. The exact contrary is our case, as what has to be taken out to the islands consists of a diversity of all sorts of things that persons there may be in need of, as, for instance, clothes to clothe themselves with, and many things necessary for their buildings and farms, of which no account can be kept. So that I should think it very difficult and almost impossible for your Highness to order the business to be done in that manner, especially as many things that are needed in the islands can be procured more conveniently from other

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Carta de Amerrigo Vespucci al Cardenal Arzobispo de Toledo (Jiménes de Cisneros), dándole su parecer sobre las mercancias que hubieran de llevarse á las islas Antillas. — Sevilla, 9 de diciembre de 1508.

MUY REVERENDO É MAGNIFICO SEÑOR, — Tengo pues de agradeszer la confianza que debo á vuestra reverendisima señoria, que non dexaré de dezirle my pareszer, syn que me mueva ynterese alguno, avnque non oviera gana de hablar dello; ya que agora he de responder sobre lo que háse de llevar á las yslas, sy es bien que vaya por vna mano y que Su Alteza lleve el provecho, segun que lo haze el rey de Portogal en lo de la Mina del Oro, o sea, como creo aver entendido ser la manera de pensar de Su Alteza, que cada vno tenga lybertad de yr i llevar lo que quisyere.

Yo hallo grande diferenzia del tracto del rey de Portogal á este dacá, por quel vno es enviar á tierra de moros i á vn solo lugar vna o dos mercaderias apreziadas á zierto prezio, y de aquellas le responde los fatores que allá tiene, con el valor del mismo prezio o con la ropa; y acá es al contrario, porque lo que se ha de llevar á las yslas es diversidad de todas cosas que las presonas puedan aver menester, asy de vestyr como vestidos i muchas cosas nezesarias para edifyzios i grangerias, que no tienen quenta ny razon: de manera, que yo averia por muy dificoltoso i casy imposyble que Su Alteza lo pueda mandar hazer desta manera, en espezial que muchas de las cosas que son menester para las yslas, cumple más llevarlas

countries than this. For instance, from the Canaries and the Portuguese Islands, from which they get live stock and provisions, and other necessary articles. And there would have to be an agent for each thing, and of many things no account could be given, for some are consumed, others damaged, and still others spoiled. For this reason, in my opinion, the business cannot be transacted in that way; and, if the attempt shall be made, I think time will show that I am right.

By either of two ways it seems to me possible that your Highness may always derive a profit from the importation of goods that are carried to the islands, without trouble or expense on your part. The first is to lay a fixed tax on all that is taken to the islands, as it may seem right to your Highness, and to allow everybody to go freely and carry whatever he chooses: the other is to commit the traffic to merchants who shall share the profit with your Highness, they furnishing all that is needed without your Highness giving any care to the matter. In such a partnership, this arrangement would have to be made: that in the said islands the treasurer of your Highness and the agent of the merchants should be charged jointly with the business of receiving and selling all goods sent thither, each of them keeping his book in which, by the hands of two persons, every thing that was sold would be set down.

And there should be a statement of the cost of all the goods that are sent in each ship, signed by the merchant and the treasurer, or some other agent for your Highness appointed to be in Seville or Cadiz, in order that, by means of this account, those in the islands can correct their accounts of all that each ship brings, and that each person may take his share of the profit, the merchant receiving back the cost of the

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de otras partes que destas, asy como de las yslas de Canaria y las de Portogal, de las quales sacan ganados y vituallas y otras cosas nezesarias; i para cada cosa seria menester vn fator, i ay muchas dellas de que non se podria dar quenta, porque dellas se comen, dellas se dañan y otras se pierden; y desta causa, á my ver, non se podria llevar este negozio por la dicha manera, i sy en espirienzia lo pusyere, el tiempo doy por testygo.

Syempre que Su Alteza tenga algun provecho en la entrada de las ropas que á las yslas se llevaren syn cuidado ny costa, ocurreme vno de dos camynos: el uno, poner vn zierto derecho en todo lo que á las yslas se llevase, qual á Su Alteza paresziere, i que cada vno pudiese libremente yr i llevar lo que quisyere; el otro, es encargar esta negoziacion á mercaderes que respartiesen el provecho con Su Alteza i forneziesen todo lo que fuese menester, sin que Su Alteza toviese dello cuidado. I en esta tal compañya seria de tener esta orden: que toviese en las dichas yslas cargo de entender en el reszibir i vender de las ropas que allá se enviaren el thesorero de Su Alteza, en compañya del fator de los mercaderes, tenyendo cada vno dellos su libro en que, por dos manos, se asentase todo lo que se vendiese.

Y de todas las ropas que se enviasen en cada navio, fuese la quenta de lo oviesen costado, firmada del mercader y del thezorero, o bien de otro fator por Su Alteza deputado á estar en Sevilla o en Cadiz, para que, segun aquella, pudiesen en las yslas soldar quenta de todo lo que llevare cada navio sobre sy, i tomar cada vna su parte de la gananzia, entregandose el mercader del costo de la ropa con costa y fletes, porque desta manera

goods with the charges and freight. And in this way there would be order and agreement, and no opportunity for fraud or deceit. In reference to the things that would be carried from other countries than our own, or from the islands above mentioned, and to their cost, the merchant and the agent of your Highness, who resided in Seville or Cadiz, could intrust this to some person who seemed to them suitable.

This is my opinion with due submission to those who know more. From Seville, the 9th day of the month of December, 1508.

I humbly kiss the hands of your most reverend lordship.

AMERRIGO VESPUCCI,
Chief Pilot.

[Addressed] To the most reverend and magnificent Lord, Cardinal of Spain Archbishop of Toledo.

[Indorsed on the back] From Amerrigo Vespucci, about carrying goods to the islands.

Replies with his opinion, December 9th, that my lord the Cardinal may see it. (Rubric.)

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averia orden y conzierto, ny podria aver fraude ny engaño alguno; i para las cosas que se oviesen de llevar de fuera dacá y de las yslas de suso nombradas y saber el costo dellas, el mercader y fator de Su Alteza que estoviese en Sevilla o Cadiz, podria dar el cargo á alguna presona que á ellos paresziere.

Este es my pareszer, remityendome á los que más saben.

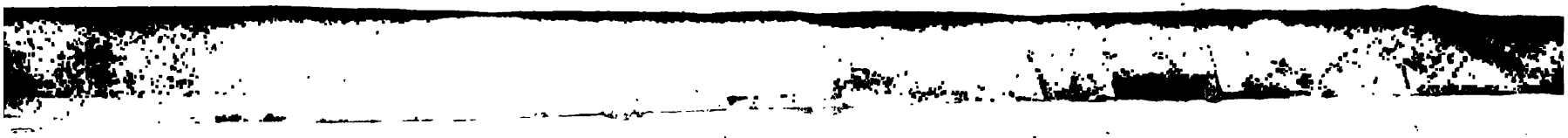
De Sevilla, á ix dias del mes de diziembre de mill é quinientos é ocho años.

De vuestra reverendisima señoria humylmente beso las manos.

AMERRIGO VESPUCCI,
Piloto Mayor.

[Sobre] Reverendisymo é magnifyco Señor [el Señor] Cardenal d'España, Arzobispo de Toledo.

[Anotacion al dorso] De Amerrigo Vespucci, sobre llevar cosas á las islas.
Responde con su paresçer de ix diciembre, para que lo vea m señor el señor Cardenal. (Rúbrica.)



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